

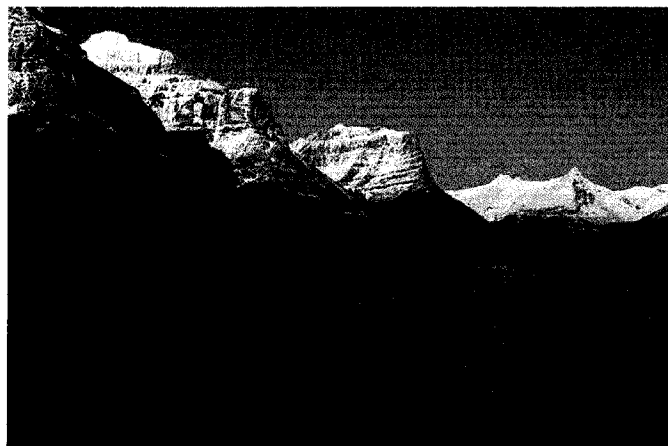


STATE RECORD SERVICES
COUNT NO. 2
DATE 2-5-07
BILL NO. 513
SANDP. RUC

FACT SHEET

Montana's National Parks

Montana is fortunate to have two of the America's greatest crown jewels: Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks. These parks, and others in the state, attract vacationers from around the world who come to see their magnificent scenic beauty and learn about their fascinating history. Yellowstone National Park is the world's first national park having been established in 1872. The park is famous for its free-roaming bison and nearly 10,000 hot springs and geysers, which have amazed and inspired generations of visitors.



Glacier National Park was established in 1910 and later entered into an innovative partnership with Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada to form Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park in 1932. The spectacular glaciated landscape is a hiker's and horse-packer's paradise containing 700 miles of maintained trails that lead deep into one of the largest intact ecosystems in the lower 48 states. Montana also contains the Big Hole and Little Bighorn Battlefields, where Native Americans and US soldiers fought and received horrific losses. Other parks in the state include the 55-mile long Bighorn Canyon, as well as the Grant-Kohrs Ranch that preserves a cattle baron's headquarters and continues to be a working ranch.

Increasingly, Montana's National Parks are being recognized as major economic assets for the state, with Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks alone attracting half of Montana's visitors every year according to a study by the University of Montana. The University also found that park visitors make up an astonishing 75% of all expenditures by the state's summer visitors. Gateway communities have also become a beacon for new entrepreneurial businesses created by "amenity migrants" in knowledge-based industries that choose to locate near a national park. Unfortunately, deteriorating park infrastructure and services may already be affecting the outstanding economic benefits of parks.

Funding Needs for Glacier National Park

- The park is annually under-funded by \$7 million. An additional \$400 million in project needs have been identified, the bulk of which address deferred maintenance needs. Currently, the park's deferred maintenance backlog, derived from a comprehensive asset management system, is \$280 million. This figure is expected to grow to between \$300 and \$400 million once condition assessment data has been entered into the system.

- Three campgrounds where visitors previously had access to clean drinking water no longer will provide potable water due to budget cutbacks in 2006. These include Cutbank, Logging and Quartz campgrounds.
- In its 2001 Engineering Study of the Going-to-the-Sun Road, Washington Infrastructure Services (formerly Morrison Knudson) reported that "currently, the funds allocated to maintenance of the Road are less than one third of that needed to provide adequate maintenance." Lack of maintenance is the primary reason that major rehabilitation of the road is needed.
- In 2003, a law enforcement needs assessment identified a need for 64 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees to provide appropriate law enforcement, visitor safety, and resource protection. Only 36 FTE staffed Glacier's visitor and resource protection programs that year.
- Glacier's Going-to-the-Sun Road borders on catastrophic failure, and will cost \$150 million to rehabilitate. Congress recently authorized expenditure of \$50 million to begin fixing this historic road, although appropriation of this sum has not yet been secured.
- Historic structures such as Glacier's Many Glacier Hotel need extensive repairs. Based on the asset management system, only 30 of 297 historic structures in the park are in good shape.
- Glacier is experiencing an erosion of its spending power as appropriations fail to keep pace with increased costs. For example, construction costs have increased 30 percent due to high regional demand for contractors and increasing energy and materials cost.
- Important cultural, historic, and religious artifacts are susceptible to theft and vandalism. A lack of money prevents the Park Service from adequately studying, monitoring, and protecting significant archaeological and cultural sites throughout the park.
- While visitor use is trending to more visitation during shoulder seasons, limited budgets constrain the ability of Glacier to provide adequate visitor and resource protection in the spring and fall.

Funding Needs for Yellowstone National Park

- A business plan analysis conducted by Yellowstone National Park and the National Parks Conservation Association in 2003 found that the park is under-funded by more than \$20 million annually, a number equating to more than 30 percent of expected annual needs.
- Although Yellowstone National Park visitation grew 32 percent from 1987 to 1996, the number of seasonal rangers dropped by 33 percent. In 2003, there were 59 permanent law enforcement rangers, down from 63 in 1998.
- Only 6 percent of the park's nearly three million annual visitors have the opportunity to participate in a formal, interactive outdoor educational experience. The park must also turn away almost 60 percent of all school groups who wish to participate in Expedition Yellowstone, a weeklong hands-on educational program.
- Less than 30 percent of Yellowstone's 121 known geothermal areas have been thoroughly inventoried, in part due to the park having only one staff geologist.
- There are over 200 non-native species that have invaded Yellowstone National Park. For example, non-native lake trout and whirling disease threaten 42 native species and a \$36 million sport fishery. Yellowstone has identified that it would cost \$1.2 million to adequately address the non-native species invasion in the park.
- Twenty-one American Indian tribes have a historical connection with Yellowstone, yet only two percent of the park has been surveyed for relevant archaeological and historical sites. Through natural erosion, land use, and vandalism, sites are being damaged before they can be recorded. For lack of money, Yellowstone has just one archaeologist to cover 2.2 million acres.